

The Bethune Council House, declared a National Historic Site by Congress in 1982, was acquired by the National Park Service (NPS) in 1994. The Bethune Council House, a historic house museum, features original furniture, photographs and facsimiles of historic documents from the National Council of Negro Women (NCNW). This legislation is needed for two reasons. First, the Bethune House is not handicap accessible, and as a historic building, it would be impossible to alter the house in any way without endangering its historic nature. This bill would extend the current boundary of the Bethune House by authorizing the NPS to acquire the abutting property to allow handicapped accessibility. Second, the bill provides space for administrative offices for the NPS to conduct duties related to the Bethune Council House.

This legislation is needed to carry out the important mission of the Bethune Council House. The Bethune legacy is carried forward today by the nation's most prominent civil rights leader, Dr. Dorothy Height, Chair and President Emerita of the NCNW, who recently received the Congressional Gold Medal of here in the Congress. Consequently, this bill honors both of these heroes of our country by assuring that the first home of the organization to which they dedicated their lives is accessible to all Americans. I ask that the House pass this bill promptly.

TRIBUTE TO MS. ESTHER WRIGHT

HON. DONALD M. PAYNE

OF NEW JERSEY

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 5, 2004

Mr. PAYNE. Mr. Speaker, Ms. Esther Dolores Wright has dedicated her life to the service of others as an educator for over 40 years. She began her teaching career in Newark, N.J. in 1964, and over the years, she has literally touched thousands of lives in a positive way. Ms. Wright received her Masters of Arts in Education with a concentration in Administration and Supervision from the University of Virginia in May, 1976. She has served the students, parents, and teachers of Maple Avenue School as an Administrator for over 15 years.

During her tenure as Principal of Maple Avenue School, she has presided over many important changes to the school facility and programs, including complete renovations to the school auditorium, gymnasium, and playground area, as well as the establishment of a state of the art science lab and the creation of a computer network, which provides internet access to all of Maple Avenue School's primary and middle school students. They have implemented a distance learning program in conjunction with the New Jersey State Department of Education, which recognized Maple Avenue School with a 'Best Practices' award. She has continued to provide support for innovative programs to encourage student achievement such as the Morning, After School, and Saturday Academy enrichment programs; character development programs such as Best Friends for girls and Best Men for boys; the Afternoon and Evening After School Youth Development Programs, which serve the student and community populations; and Project ACCEL, which reduces high school drop out rates and retention rates for students.

In addition, under Ms. Wright's guidance and direction, Maple Avenue School and students have been at the forefront of a number of innovative initiatives such as Law Day, Career Day, Instrumental and Choral Music programs, the Talented and Gifted Program, and a school wide Science Fair. Maple Avenue School students have represented the school in the district Science Fair, Math Fair, and Technology Fair, and have consistently won local and regional Art awards. In addition, their debate team has been City Champion for several consecutive years and their basketball team played in the 2003 District Championship finals.

During Ms. Wright's time as Principal, Maple Avenue School has also been recognized by the district for achievements in Literacy, Science, and Math. Based upon 8th grade GEPA scores for the past two years, Maple Avenue School has been cited as one of the top 5 schools and one of the top 10 schools, respectively, in the district in Literacy. During the same time period, Maple Avenue School has been recognized as one of the most improved schools and as one of the top 10 schools in the district in Science. During the 2001-2002 school year, Maple Avenue School has been one of the top 10 most improved schools in Math, according to ESPA scores, and has been a past winner of the Math Olympics and most recently went to the district semi-finals.

Maple Avenue graduates are accepted into the Newark Public School's Magnet High School Programs; Arts High; Science High; University, Technology, and Essex County Vocational High School; as well as area Private and Catholic High Schools at a rate of 30 percent. Many more participate in Magnet Career Academies, which provide transition into skilled career opportunities after High School.

I salute Ms. Wright for her dedication to the students, parents, and teachers in our community, and I am proud to have her in my district. Mr. Speaker, please join me in extending my thanks to Ms. Wright for her lifetime of public service, and I invite my colleagues to join me in recognizing the achievements of the Maple Avenue School.

IN SUPPORT OF THE NATIONAL VISION STRATEGY

HON. PATRICK J. TIBERI

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 5, 2004

Mr. TIBERI. Mr. Speaker, as a founding member of the Congressional Vision Caucus, I rise to recognize May as Healthy Vision Month, and to discuss the important recommendations of the Vision Problems Action Plan, A National Public Health Strategy as a way to prevent blindness and vision loss.

Good vision is critical to conducting activities of daily living, is a portal for language, and affects developmental learning, communicating, working, health and quality of life.

Unfortunately, far too many people are at risk for losing their eyesight. More than 80 million Americans have a potentially blinding eye disease, 3 million have low vision, 1.1 million are legally blind, and an additional 200,000 are more severely visually impaired. Despite the fact that half of all blindness can be pre-

vented, far too many people do not access the care they need. If nothing is done, the number of blind and visually impaired individuals will double by 2030.

That is why awareness, early diagnosis and prevention are so important. Healthy Vision Month, a component of Healthy People 2010, is a national eye health campaign to raise awareness about the various conditions that can affect eyesight and cause vision loss.

Additionally, a coalition of leading eye health experts, including Prevent Blindness America, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Lighthouse International, and the American Academy of Ophthalmology, just this week have released the Vision Problems Action Plan, A National Public Health Strategy, to provide our nation with a framework for preventing vision loss.

This groundbreaking study recommends that, in order to reduce the occurrence of vision loss and its accompanying disabilities, our nation must concentrate our efforts in three priority areas: prevention/public health, access to care and treatment including rehabilitation, and research.

Our public health and prevention campaign must ensure that vision programs at the National Eye Institute (NEI) and Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) have the resources they need to improve communication and education campaigns, increase surveillance, epidemiology and prevention research; and implement appropriate programs, policies and systems changes.

In order to ensure access to and availability of treatment and rehabilitation services for individuals with vision loss, we must support programs at the Centers for Medicaid and Medicare Services (CMS) and the Department of Health and Human Services (HHS) that remove barriers and improve access to services covered under Medicare.

Finally, we must bolster our research efforts to improve our understanding of the eye and visual system in health and disease, as well as developing the most appropriate and effective means of prevention, and access to treatment and rehabilitation.

This report provides the roadmap we need to raise awareness about vision loss, give individuals the tools they need to prevent it, and give hope to the millions already suffering from vision loss that better treatments can be found.

I would like to thank all of the organizations involved in crafting this report, including the American Academy of Ophthalmology, the American Optometric Association, the Centers For Disease Control and Prevention, Lighthouse International, the National Alliance For Eye and Vision Research, the National Eye Institute (NEI) and most importantly, Prevent Blindness America. Prevent Blindness America should be commended for spearheading this effort, for bringing together these various groups, and for its almost century-long tradition of preventing vision loss.

INTRODUCTION OF THE COLLEGE ACCESS & OPPORTUNITY ACT

HON. JOHN A. BOEHNER

OF OHIO

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Wednesday, May 5, 2004

Mr. BOEHNER. Mr. Speaker, in 1965, Higher Education Act was established to assist low